



Catechesis At Home – Faith, Works, Light, Darkness, and Everlasting Life

Fourth Sunday of Lent – Year B

Have you ever been in total and complete darkness? Maybe you've lost power in the middle of the night, or you've been camping and it was overcast – no stars or moonlight to see by. The darkness that Jesus warns us against is even deeper than that. This is the darkness of the soul, sinfulness that blinds us to God's mercy and love. This is the darkness the People of Israel were engulfed in when they were conquered and carried off into exile – infidelity upon infidelity, they piled upon themselves the sin of idolatry and turned their backs on God (2 Chronicles 36:14). He allowed them to experience the darkness for a time, then rescued them through a non-believer, King Cyrus (2 Chronicles 36:23). Their "works" did not save them, but they did condemn them (see last week's TWFT). Then, Jesus comes and explains that it is faith in Himself that will save us from the darkness of sin and death (John 3:14). St. Paul reiterates this Truth – it is by faith, not works that we are saved (Ephesians 2:8). Yet, we are also told elsewhere to do good works (Matthew 25:31-46). There's the Works of Mercy that we are encouraged and even commanded to do. So, which is it?

The gifts of faith and salvation are not dependent upon our works – God gives them freely, but if we are truly faithful and desire to receive the gift of salvation, we will do good works, because that is the will of God (James 2:14-26). In order to receive the salvation that Jesus offers us through His Passion, Death, and Resurrection, then we are to follow Him and the path that He lights for us. He is the Way, the Truth, and the Life (John 14:6) – He is the Light in the darkness (John 1:5). We are in exile here upon this earth and Jesus offers us a way Home.

DISCUSSION

God is merciful and He desires nothing more than for us to join Him in heaven at the end of our earthly journey. How does this make you feel? Do you feel that you deserve His love and salvation? Do you feel that you can never achieve heaven? Or do you feel that you are doing okay and on the right track? Talk together about these questions. Whatever you feel, the truth is, we are not worthy in ourselves, but Jesus Christ makes us worthy. Our baptism has brought us into the life of God and it is ours to lose.

ACTIVITY

Get your family together in as complete darkness as possible. This may be a large closet or an interior hallway or bathroom even. Take along a flashlight. (Explain to anyone who may be frightened of the dark that it will be dark, but only for a short time, and Mom and Dad are right there. Hold hands or place them in your lap or next to you.)

While in the dark, ask – how does it feel? Do you feel safe or not? Do you feel disoriented? Is it uncomfortable? Some may not have negative feelings, because you are at home, and with each other. You may need to ask them to put themselves into a situation where darkness would be disorienting or uncomfortable in their imaginations. The point is that darkness *can* be negative. Now turn on the flashlight but hold it so it gives off very little light or only illuminates a small corner of the space.

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With the little bit of light, how does that make you feel? After everyone answers, turn on the lights. Let everyone's eyes adjust to the light. How does that feel? What makes the light better than the dark?

How does Jesus shine His light on us so that we can see better and more clearly? What parts of our lives do we need to let His light shine on? What do we want to keep tucked away in the dark?

One of the things that Jesus calls us to is authentic faith (Matthew 15:7-9). That authenticity will be lived out in what we do and say – our works. If we allow ourselves to be open and fully take advantage of the grace He offers through faith and salvation, our lives will shine with His light, our works will be visible reminders to ourselves and others that Jesus is our Lord and Savior, and God's love is alive and active. Lent is a special time to reflect on our sinfulness, repent of it, and ask for forgiveness. It is also a time to draw closer to Jesus and allow Him to heal us and lead us into the Light of salvation and eternal life. Make a step toward Him this week, and into the Light.

CLOSING PRAYERS

Act of Faith

O my God, I firmly believe that You are one God in Three Divine Persons: the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. I believe in Jesus Christ, Your Son, who became a Man and died for our sins, and who will come to judge the living and the dead. I believe these and all the truths which the holy Catholic Church teaches, because You who know all have revealed them, who can neither deceive nor be deceived. Amen.

Act of Hope

O my God, trusting in Your goodness and promises, I hope to obtain pardon for my sins, the help of your grace, and life everlasting, through Jesus Christ, my Lord and Redeemer. Amen.

Act of Love

O my God, I love You above all things, with my whole heart and soul, because You are all-good and worthy of all my love. I love my neighbor as myself for love of you. I forgive all who have injured me, and I ask pardon of all whom I have injured. Amen.

Song for the Week – *Christ be our Light*

<https://vimeo.com/291514114>

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